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ABSTRACT

The Los Angeles Teacher Trainee program is designed to help recruit talented people into teaching; the Mentor Teacher component of that program is designed to help retain capable teachers by expanding their rewards and opportunities. Requirements of the Teacher Trainee Program intersect with the inducements of the Mentor Teacher Program to form a structure of support for beginning teachers. Mentor teachers are responsible for guiding and supporting new teachers who have had no previous professional preparation. This means helping novices learn to teach while teaching. How mentor teachers carry out their mentoring responsibilities has consequences for the kind of teachers trainees become and the sort of learning opportunities they extend to students. This report examines what Los Angeles (California) mentors are supposed to do according to the expectations of program officials; what mentors actually do based on their own testimony; researchers' observations of mentors' interactions with teacher trainees; and what teacher trainees say mentors do based on interviews with them across their 2 years in the program. Also considered is how this mentoring model adds up as preparation for and induction into teaching. (LL)

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NCRTL

National Center for Research on Teacher Learning

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LOS ANGELES MENTORS: LOCAL GUIDES OR EDUCATIONAL COMPANIONS?

Sharon Feiman-Nemser and Michelle B. Parker

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Abstract

Mentor teachers in the Los Angeles Teacher Trainee Program have a daunting responsibility. They are supposed to guide and support new teachers who have no previous professional preparation. This means they must help novices learn to teach while both they and the novices teach full time. How mentor teachers carry out their mentoring responsibilities has consequences for the kind of teachers trainees become and the sort of learning opportunities they extend to students. This report examines what Los Angeles mentors are supposed to do according to the expectations of program officials, what mentors actually do based on their testimony and the researchers observations of their interactions with teacher trainees, and what teacher trainees say mentors do based on interview with them across their two years in the program. The researchers also consider how this version of mentoring adds up as preparation for and induction into teaching.

LOS ANGELES MENTORS: LOCAL GUIDES OR EDUCATIONAL COMPANIONS?

Sharon Feiman-Nemser and Michelle B. Parker[1]

Created by the same piece of legislation, the Teacher Trainee program[2] and the Mentor Teacher program in California have developed within the broader national debate about improving the quality of teaching. The Teacher Trainee program addresses a chronic teacher shortage problem by allowing districts to hire college graduates who lack a teaching certificate. Supporters argue that the program helps upgrade the quality of teaching by attracting persons who would not likely enter the field through conventional teacher education.

If the Teacher Trainee program is designed to help *recruit* talented people into teaching, the Mentor Teacher program is designed to help *retain* capable teachers by expanding their rewards and opportunities. Without giving up classroom teaching, experienced teachers can take on enlarged responsibilities such as working with beginning teachers or providing leadership in curriculum development. In the rationale for the Mentor Teacher program, the legislature declared its intent to "provide incentives to teachers of demonstrated ability to remain in the public school." And a study of the program by the Far West Laboratory linked the goal of retention with the goal of improvement by describing the Mentor Teacher Program as "an effort to retain skillful teachers and to improve teaching by promoting direct, rigorous, and consequential activities and relations between mentors and other teachers" (Shulman, Hansen, & King, 1985).

In Los Angeles, the requirements of the Teacher Trainee program intersect with the inducements of the Mentor Teacher program to form a structure of support for beginning teachers. The state legislation requires school districts implementing a Teacher Trainee program to assign a mentor teacher to each trainee. The legislation allocates funds to districts participating in the Mentor Teacher program—$4000 stipends for district-designated mentors and an additional $2000 per mentor to cover the costs of implementing the program (e.g., for substitutes, release time, travel between schools). In Los Angeles, the primary

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[2]Later legislation changed the name of the Teacher Trainee Program to the District Intern Program. This report is based on data gathered from 1987-1989 when the name Teacher Trainee Program was in use and when the program only had secondary candidates.

responsibility of mentor teachers is to guide and assist new teachers, including those in the Teacher Trainee program.

An Improvement Over "Sink-or-Swim" Induction

While concerns about recruitment and retention provide a large part of the motivation, the Teacher Trainee program also represents an improvement over emergency credentialing and "sink-or-swim" induction. Faced with critical teacher shortages in key subject areas and hard-to-staff schools, Los Angeles like other large urban centers issues emergency credentials to college graduates who may lack both subject matter knowledge and professional preparation. Now the district can point to the Teacher Trainee program which offers two years of on-the-job training and support to a portion of its noncertified beginning teachers.

The problems surrounding the first year of teaching are well documented in the literature (Conant, 1963; Griffin & Millies, 1987; Lacey, 1977; Lortie, 1975). While some accounts portray relatively smooth beginnings (Huberman, 1989), most describe the reality shock, struggle for survival, and trial-and-error learning that occurs when new teachers assume full-time teaching responsibilities without assistance (Bullough, 1987; McDonald, 1982; Ryan, 1970). Since systematic induction support is the exception not the rule, most new teachers must "sink or swim" on their own.

All Beginning Teachers Are Learners

The spread of beginning teacher assistance programs during the 1980s may reflect a growing appreciation that the first years of teaching are a formative stage in learning to teach, influencing not only whether people stay in teaching, but also what kind of teacher they become (Nemser, 1983). Beginning teachers really have two jobs to do—they have to do the job they were hired for and they have to learn to do that job (Wildman, Niles, Magliaro & McLaughlin, 1989). No matter what preparation teachers receive, many aspects of teaching can only be learned *in situ*.

Teachers must learn how to engage *this* class in worthwhile learning and adapt *this* curriculum to the needs and capabilities of these students. Novices do not have a large repertoire of strategies for representing and presenting their content. Nor do they have a developed sense of what different students are like as learners and what problems they are likely to encounter in learning specific content. If this is true for beginning teachers with professional preparation, it is especially true for beginning teachers with no previous professional education.

Case studies of beginning teachers without professional preparation, including alternate route candidates, show that even with a strong subject matter background such teachers have difficulty transforming what they know about their subjects into suitable instruction for students (Grossman, 1990; Shulman, 1989). When these beginning teachers differ from their students in ethnic or social class background, their difficulties expand. Most studies of beginning teacher concerns identify discipline and classroom management as the critical areas (see Veenman, 1984, for a review of such studies). The case studies mentioned above extend our understanding of what novices need to know by highlighting the challenge of learning to connect students and subject matter in meaningful ways.[3]

Mentor Teachers to the Rescue?

As reform initiatives expand support for new teachers, the idea of assigning mentor teachers to work with novices has gained acceptance. Even in a field like teaching where most U.S. teachers typically work alone, seeking help only when they encounter difficulties, the notion that beginners need the support and guidance of more experienced colleagues makes sense. While mentor teachers may have trouble establishing their legitimacy with peers, working with beginning teachers seems more acceptable, especially when people agree publicly that teaching is hard work (Little, 1990a).

The induction literature cites the mentor teacher as the key element in any beginning teacher assistance program (Bey & Holmes, 1990; Brooks, 1987; Huling-Austin, 1986, 1990). But acknowledging the centrality of the mentor teacher is not the same as agreeing on what mentor teachers should be doing in different contexts. Clearly mentor teachers are expected to orient beginning teachers to their local setting and help them get off to a good start. But there is a big difference between the kind of support that makes beginning teachers feel at home and the kind of support that helps them develop a principled understanding of teaching (Little, 1987, 1990a).

The language of mentoring—aid and assistance, support and guidance, coaching and consultation—conveys a general role orientation and a handful of studies (e.g., McKibben, 1988; Murphy, Merseth, & Morey, 1990; Odell, 1986; Shulman & Bernhardt, 1990) identify

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[3]John Dewey (1965/1904) made a similar argument in 1904 in his essay on "The Relation of Theory and Practice in Education." He argued that beginning teachers have two jobs to do: they have to learn to manage instruction and they have to learn to think about their subject matter from a pedagogical perspective. No novice could attend equally to both these compelling tasks. For this reason, Dewey recommended that preservice preparation concentrate on helping novices develop the habit of psychological observation and insight and a pedagogical perspective on subject matter teaching, rather than focus on developing technical competence lest "immediate skill may be got at the cost of the power to go on growing" (p. 320). Whether this advice holds in a situation like an alternate route program where novices begin teaching without the kind of preparation Dewey recommended is an open question.

types of support and assistance that mentor teachers offer new teachers. For example, an evaluation study of the California alternate route program conducted by the Commission on Teacher Credentialing describes the content of assistance offered to trainees in their first and second years in the program. The researchers note a shift from a focus on general information and teaching materials in the first year to greater emphasis on teaching strategies in the second year. They interpret this to mean that, as trainees acquired "survival skills" and adjusted to their new responsibilities, they paid more attention to developing their teaching skills (McKibben, 1988).

While such studies may inform us about general patterns, they say little about what mentoring actually looks like in particular contexts and what beginning teachers have an opportunity to learn through their interactions with mentor teachers. This report focuses on mentoring in a particular context—junior and senior high schools in Los Angeles where mentor teachers and teacher trainees teach. It examines three questions: (1) What are LA mentors supposed to do in their work with teacher trainees? (2) What do LA mentors actually do in their work with teacher trainees? (3) How does their mentoring add up as preparation for and induction into teaching? To answer the first question, we draw on interviews with district-level administrators responsible for the Mentor Teacher program and on data about the 30-hour training program that all mentor teachers are required to participate in before they begin working with teacher trainees. To answer the second question, we draw on observational and interview data with 12 mentor teachers gathered as part of a study of the Los Angeles alternate teacher certification program. To answer the third question, we draw on interviews with teacher trainees about what they got from their mentors and on normative perspectives on clinical teacher education and teacher induction. The data were collected in conjunction with the Teacher Education and Learning to Teach study mounted by the National Center for Research on Teacher Education at Michigan State University (predecessor to the National Center for Research on Teacher Learning).

What Are LA Mentors Supposed to Do?

Mentors provide the "school-based portion" of the Teacher Trainee program. Although the administrative staffs of the Mentor Teacher and the Teacher Trainee programs work closely together, the programs themselves are managed separately. One result is that mentor teachers know relatively little about what trainees are exposed to in their workshops and seminars during the year. Like cooperating teachers in conventional preservice programs, they lack the information to help trainees draw connections between the "academic" and the "clinical" components of their training.

Mentors work with two-four trainees located in the school where they teach or at a nearby school. Their term lasts three years. Because the district cannot afford to reduce mentors' teaching load, they must fit mentoring in around the edges of full-time teaching. To minimize the time mentors spend away from their own students, they often talk with trainees before or after school or during lunch if they teach in the same building. If they want to visit the trainees' classroom, mentor teachers must arrange for a substitute to cover their own classes. These working conditions influence the character of their mentoring (Feiman-Nemser & Parker, 1990).

Official Role Definition

The legislation stipulates that mentor teachers are supposed to "guide" and "assist" new teachers, not evaluate them. Officials in charge of the program use the same language to describe what mentors are supposed to do:

> It's not an evaluation type of thing. Mentors are to guide the new teachers, to provide assistance, to help them in securing skills. All the things that the teachers are lacking because they have not had any teaching classes and those everyday things that you learn just by virtue of teaching.

Another official detailed the kind of local assistance she hopes that mentor teachers will provide. At the beginning of the year, mentor teachers should help novices organize their classroom and figure out what content they will cover, breaking it down into quarterly, unit, and daily lesson plans. They should explain how to order supplies, what to do about discipline problems, where to keep attendance cards. When the first grading period comes around, mentors should show novices how to record grades and, at the end of the school year, they should help new teachers fill out end-of-the-year records so that everything will be in order for the next teacher. In general, officials expressed the view that teacher trainees knew their subject matter but needed help in how to teach it. As one put it: "Our teachers are well versed in their subject areas, but they need to know how to deliver it. So they need the teaching techniques, the technology of the whole business."

When we asked mentor teachers early in the school year what they had been working on with their trainees, their responses were often quite consonant with this official's expectations about their role. The exchange below between the interviewer (I) and mentor teacher (MT) is typical:

I: What have you been working on with Carol?

MT: Initially we worked on just the nuts and bolts issues of handling a full teaching load. Coming in right from college, with no student teaching experience and being thrust into a classroom, the first week was simply orienting her to the school. . . . Then you meet the classes for the first time and you're scared to death and you know you've done the wrong thing. Trying to establish yourself, handling certain situations . . .

Later in the year, in response to the same question, this mentor teacher said that her visits had become "more social than anything else. . . . At this point I want to allow her to be very secure in the things that she is doing."

Official statements about the mentor teacher's role suggest that mentors' expertise comes primarily from their experience teaching in this context and that their main responsibility is to steer novices safely through their first year of teaching. The 30-hour required training adds another set of messages about what mentors are supposed to do and about the sources of knowledge they should draw on. Without denying the value of mentors' practical expertise, the training seems designed to give mentors something to say besides, "That's the way I do it" (Bird, 1986).

Messages From the Required Training

All mentor teachers, regardless of their grade level and subject matter area, receive the same training.[4] Created by the district's professional development staff, the training presumes that mentors need new skills because their work differs from classroom teaching. Besides orienting mentors to their new role and presenting strategies to use in helping novices deal with common problems (e.g., classroom management), the training introduces mentors to techniques of observation, consultation, and coaching. The implication is that mentor teachers should engage novices in a careful analysis of their teaching, an uncommon activity among teachers.

The opening sessions orient mentors to their new role. Veteran mentors describe the "wonders and traumas" of the work and state and local officials review procedures and guidelines which mentors must follow. Separate workshops focus on leadership styles, how

[4]Information about the training comes from three main sources: (1) a *Program Guide for Mentor Training*, a Far West Laboratory publication edited by J.W. Little and L. Nelson (1990) and based on the materials used in Los Angeles; (2) comments mentors made in interviews; and (3) interviews with district administrators responsible for the mentor teacher and teacher trainee programs.

to balance classroom teaching and mentoring responsibilities, and elements of good teaching as identified by teacher effectiveness research.

In sessions on "assisting new teachers," mentors learn about typical problems that beginning teachers face and hear suggestions for how to respond (e.g., develop a resource file of materials useful to beginners, hold one or more orientation meetings at your school to explain procedures such as filling out grade reports). They also discuss the issue of developing relationships with novices. Sessions on classroom management and organization introduce mentors to various research-based systems and provide them with checklists for different areas of classroom management (e.g., organizing the room, developing rules and procedures, maintaining a management system).

The heart of the training focuses on classroom consultation, observation, and coaching. Mentors review observation and conferencing strategies, including the proper use of pre- and post-observation conferences, coaching, and scripting (writing down all verbal communication in the lesson). They receive numerous handouts including a list of coaching skills (e.g., active listening), a list of feedback techniques (e.g., avoid giving direct advice, provide specific feedback), a list of opening questions (e.g., How do you feel about my coming to observe the lesson?). They practice the various skills in small groups, scripting videotaped lessons and role playing conferences.

The training materials convey a view of mentoring as a technical activity that can be controlled by applying specific strategies and techniques. Mentors are supposed to promote direct instruction, address issues of classroom management and organization, attend to trainees' concerns, offer nonjudgmental feedback and facilitate interactive conferences. This is consistent with popular texts on clinical supervision (e.g., Acheson & Gall, 1987) which address supervisory procedures but neglect issues of content, purpose, context.

The training also downplays the "wisdom of practice" in favor of research-based prescriptions. Although mentors have been chosen for their reputation as classroom teachers, the training does not explicitly build on their practical expertise or their knowledge of students and curriculum. Rather it emphasizes procedural knowledge produced by researchers and codified in the form of lesson plan formats, supervision cycles, and observation strategies. The message seems to be that effective mentors use these practices.

What mentors make of their training. When we asked mentors to describe their training, they all presented a fragmented picture, recalling bits and pieces of what they encountered. Most mentioned at least one technique or principle they learned about. While some valued the training more than others, all appreciated the chance to "rub elbows" with other mentors.

Several mentors recalled learning administrative procedures—"there [are] forms you fill out when you go on an interview or when you go sit on a classroom visitation." One could not decide whether it was "a lot of strategies" or "mostly administrative procedures." And a third said that she picked up "marvelous little hints" that she had not learned in 30 years of teaching.

Almost everyone we interviewed mentioned learning the technique of "scripting" which one mentor defined as "sitting in the classroom and, in shorthand, recording anything and everything that you possibly can, keeping track of time." When this mentor scripts a lesson, she looks for the required components of a "directed lesson." Since the district evaluates teachers on their ability to teach directed lessons, she feels responsible for helping novices learn to talk about and produce lessons that fit this format.

Beyond the techniques, most mentors agreed with their colleague who said that "the best part of the training was simply talking to other mentors," especially experienced mentors who "warned us about things we might run into and who talked about the successes they felt they had." The training emphasized "professional knowledge," but mentors valued situated knowledge, practical experience about mentoring presented in the form of stories.

Mentors got ideas about specific things to say and do from their training which we saw them enact in their practice. Still, the training did not seem to help them develop a professional role orientation. They continued to talk about their work as short-term assistance during a stressful transition period and to emphasize the provision of emotional and material support over "objective," nonevaluative feedback.

What Mentors Think They Should Do

Overall, the mentor teachers we interviewed saw themselves as providers of emotional support, advice, and materials. At the same time, they were highly sensitive to the possibility of imposing themselves and their ways on novices. Wanting to be available, but ambivalent about sounding authoritative, the mentors endorsed the values of individualism and professional autonomy. Only 2 of the 12 mentors we interviewed expressed a more educational view of their role.

Not surprisingly, all the mentors we spoke to highlighted the importance of simply being there for the novice. One mentor called the program an "institutionalized buddy system" whose primary benefit was to "relieve that sense of isolation and bring new people into the school." Mentors who taught in the same building as their trainees valued the chance for informal contact whenever the need arose and those teaching in different buildings regretted the fact that they were not sufficiently accessible.

Most mentors also underscored the importance of providing materials and advice. Rita[5] told the researcher that she was someone whom the trainees can "come and talk to and who can say, 'We'll find an answer. We'll find materials or something.'" Lila identified the lack of materials as a problem for novices:

> One of the hardest things about being a new teacher is not having materials. And I want to be able to provide my mentee with suggested materials. She doesn't have to use them, but I want to be able to say, "Here, if you want to try this," or, "Here, I have written work to go along with this," or, "Try this groupwork idea for this."

These comments express another theme that runs through the mentors' talk about their work—a concern about not imposing themselves or their ideas on trainees. The clearest statement of this idea comes from Terri who wants to be available to help but doesn't want the trainees to feel any obligation to take her advice or follow her suggestions:

> The mentor is supposed to just be there when you need her for whatever. I establish that with them at the very beginning, that I'm here to help you in any capacity. What I do is make suggestions and I tell them, "If you don't want to follow them, it's all right. Maybe what I suggest is something you feel you can't use." If he [the trainee] doesn't accept them, you say, "OK, I've done my job. We're all individuals and maybe that is something he can't live with."

One might see this "take-it-or-leave-it" stance as a reflection of the mentors' sensitivity to the novices' fragile autonomy. Certainly it fits with the norm of individualism and noninterference that characterizes the culture of teaching in the United States (Feiman-Nemser & Floden, 1986; Lortie, 1975). Another explanation is that mentors, like most teachers, think of teaching in terms of personal style. As one mentor put it, "I don't want to say that I think all teachers should have my style because that's one thing I try to respect—that you have hundreds of different styles." The assumption that personal style is an adequate basis for teaching practice conflicts with a dominant message in the training. In a section on orienting mentors to their new role, the leader's guide explicitly states that "good teaching is more than a matter of personal style" (Little & Nelson, 1990, p. 13).

Two of the mentors did portray their role in more educational terms. For example, they talked about helping novices learn to teach and improve their practice by providing

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[5]Names of mentors and teachers are pseudonyms.

feedback about the effects of their actions on students. "I am looking at the responses of the students, at their faces," Jean explained. Since Jean teaches English and her trainee, math, she cannot help her with "how to get an algebra concept across." Instead she concentrates on "how you facilitate the learning experience in whatever your subject matter happens to be." Aware that "traditional approaches don't work," this mentor also described herself as a change agent, someone who helps young teachers adopt new ways. She wants her trainees to believe that "it's okay to do things differently than the person next door who might have been there 25 years and is doing things she did 25 years ago."

What Do Mentors Actually Do?

How do mentors enact these beliefs about their role? How do they translate the messages of their training into specific practices? What kind of mentoring do teacher trainees actually receive as part of their preparation for and induction into teaching? To answer these questions we accompanied mentor teachers on visits to teacher trainees' classrooms where we observed the trainees teach a lesson and then sat in on the conference that followed. Before and after the visit, we interviewed mentors about their goals and expectations, their assessment of what happened, the reasons for their actions. We also interviewed teacher trainees about the mentoring they received during their two years in the Teacher Trainee Program. Their testimony helped round out the impressions that we gained from firsthand observation.

Observing Mentors at Work

While mentoring has its informal side, classroom observation and feedback are critical practices in helping novices learn to teach. They are also core practices advocated by the mentor training. We highlight this aspect of the mentor's work on the assumption that what mentors notice when they look in classrooms and how they talk about it can have a powerful effect on what trainees learn about teaching and what they do as teachers.

While single observations do not provide a reliable basis for generalizing about mentors' practices, evidence of common features across a set of mentors offers firmer grounds. Our analysis of common practices is based on observations and interviews with 12 different mentor teachers. To illustrate these practices in context, we offer four brief descriptions of lessons and interactions we observed (see chart below). We chose these examples because they illustrate common practices in the larger data set.

Mentor	Trainee	Subject
Candace	Kevin	English
Lila	Clark	English
Craig	Brian	Math
Terri	Dave	Math

Candace and Kevin

While Kevin taught his eighth-grade remedial class, Candace "scripted" the lesson. Kevin started by telling students to write a story about a train wreck, making it up or basing it on something they have seen. After 20 minutes, Kevin read the study questions that went with the next story which was about a train wreck. Some questions required factual recall (e.g., "Tell how Ivanov saved the train from being wrecked"); others required interpretation (e.g., "Why is Ivanov's job important?"). Students copied the questions into their notebooks which took the rest of the period.

Candace began the conference by complimenting Kevin for displaying classroom rules. Then she asked whether students had read about or had any recent experiences with train wrecks. Kevin responded that the assignment was "just an introductory thing." Candace wondered whether students ever did any "brainstorming" in small groups. Yes, Kevin said, but this was "just an introductory thing."

Next Candace complimented Kevin for his study questions but reminded him that the school has a copy machine. Kevin explained that he did not have the questions ready in time. Candace changed the topic, asking Kevin whether students read aloud or silently. Kevin explained that he usually has students read the story to themselves, answer the questions, then read the story and their answers out loud. "Which way do you think students get more out of the story?" Candace asked. "All three," Kevin replied, because students are "very visual and kinesthetic. They like to do copy work but reading is much more difficult."

Without probing this response, Candace moved on, raising several additional topics. Finally, she invited Kevin to consider how his lesson fit with the district-endorsed seven-step lesson plan.

Candace: I was thinking about your lesson today, the writing, how would that fit in here [holding a sheet outlining the format]?

Kevin: That's an introductory thing.

Candace: So, it'd be somewhere up here at the beginning?

Kevin: Yeah, it's before, right before the initial instruction.

Candace: OK. Then the guided group practice would be?

Kevin: The guided group practice is gonna be the study questions. . . . The independent practice will probably be questions 9 and 10 on the guide. . . . The remediation activity will be the game on Thursday.

The conference ended with a brief exchange about assigning seats. Candace noted that girls and boys sit separately and asks Kevin if he ever puts "an on-task girl with a couple of off-task boys"? Kevin felt that the students were behaving and he did not want to mix them up, at least for now.

Lila and Clark

Leaving her classes with a substitute, Lila drove to a nearby junior high to observe Clark teaching an eighth-grade English as a second language class. For an opening activity, Clark had students copy sentences from the board and correct the punctuation. After reviewing this work, he turned to the main activity of the period which was completing the reading of "Will Stutely's Rescue," a Robin Hood tale. For the next 30 minutes, different students read passages of the story aloud with Clark stopping every few paragraphs to ask questions about the story. As the period progressed, most of the students became restless and stopped paying attention. For the last 10 minutes, Clark had students define and write sentences for 10 words taken from the story.

Waiting for Clark in the teachers' lounge, Lila told the researcher that she wanted to "alert Clark to the problems in the class which ran the gamut from classroom management to materials to methods to time allotment." When Clark arrived, she began by telling Clark "some positive things I saw" but quickly moved to her first concern. Believing that students were too noisy and unsettled throughout the period, Lila advised Clark: "Don't talk over kids and don't recognize kids calling out responses." When Clark defended himself by saying that the class was full of "very hyper kids," Lila suggested that he have students read a novel of their choosing for 10 minutes as an opening "dispatch" activity.

Turning to the story reading, Lila praised Clark for projecting his voice and reviewing the plot, but advised him to have students paraphrase the story rather than paraphrase it himself. She observed that the language in the story was "too difficult for these students" and suggested that Clark find an easier version. Also she felt the reading went on too long,

resulting in a "one-dimensional lesson." "They [the students] should be writing every day about what they are reading."

Finally, Lila turned to the question Clark posed at the end of the reading: "Should Robin Hood be taking from the rich to give to the poor?" Lila thought Clark should use the question as the focus for a journal entry but Clark said he planned to have a discussion next time on the question: "What might happen if Robin Hood lived today? Would it be okay to take from the rich?" Lila said she was concerned about the connections students might draw. "In reality, some people are richer than others and students need to realize that even though they may not like it." Before leaving, Lila and Clark made plans to meet the following week.

Craig and Brian

Leaving his own class with a substitute, Craig hurried into Brian's basic math class where he saw students working on four ratio and proportion problems that Brian had written on the board. As students worked, Brian and the aide circulated, reminding students what a ratio is or telling them how to solve the problem. After 15 minutes, Brian reviewed the problems, calling on different students for answers and moving on when they did not respond. For the rest of the period, Brian worked through an application problem from the textbook (how to find the distance from the top of a tree to a point in the road) while the students followed along. When they got to the solution, Brian asked: "Is the shadow longer or shorter? Should the tree appear longer than the shadow?" Only a few students responded.

Craig began the 20-minute conference by asking Brian how he felt about the lesson. Brian was frustrated because the students did not seem interested and only wanted the formula. Craig pointed out that the students depend on Brian and the aide to tell them what to do and he advised Brian to "give them opportunities to do the problems themselves, make them take responsibility. Only you worked the problems."

When Brian complained about the textbook, Craig suggested—"teach from your subject matter knowledge" and "make up your own problems." Each time Brian expressed his frustration at the students' indifference or lack of understanding, Craig suggested things Brian could do, based on his own experience in trying to engage students—make them take notes in class, have parents sign students' notebooks each week, have students work in cooperative groups so that those who understand can help others who do not. The conference ended with Craig suggesting that they talk about cooperative groups next time.

Terri and Dave

Terri observed Dave teaching an advanced algebra class to what she called "highly gifted" eighth graders. During the lesson, Terri did not take notes "because it would make him [Dave] uncomfortable." First, Dave had students do some "warm-up problems" while he took attendance. After reviewing the homework, he discussed the new content for the day—quadratic equations and parabolas. Finally, he assigned homework problems.

Terri began the 20-minute conference by asking Dave where he got the "warm-up problems" and what the purpose of the activity was. Dave explained that he got them from the book and that he was simply trying "to keep students busy while I take roll." Terri replied: "What I'd like to see is if students understand what they did." Dave insisted that they did understand. "I could tell from the answers they were giving and how quickly they were coming up with them."

Terri said she was impressed with the pace of the lesson and the amount of material covered. "Do all people catch on that fast?" she asked. Dave explained that the class was a bit behind so he decided to "cover two topics today." He knew that "students could keep up." Terri told Dave that his content knowledge was "overwhelming." Dave said he sometimes has to review the materials because new techniques have been introduced since he was in school. Although he feels confidant about the mathematics, he occasionally wonders "how you can get the message across to students and keep them controlled." Terri assured him that he will "learn that from experience." "In time you will know when students are listening even if papers are crumbling or they are talking." Today, she said, most students were "on-task."

Terri asked Dave if he ever has students working in cooperative groups. When Dave registered his reluctance, she said they would talk about that next time. On the way out, Terri told Dave to "back off the rules" and "talk to students individually." After the conference Terri told the researcher that she thinks Dave tried to cover too much material in one lesson. Even though she is not as gifted as the students, she questioned whether anyone learns that quickly.

Shaping Opportunities to Learn

In this analysis we highlight two sets of characteristics that appear not only in the four examples above but also in the other instances of mentoring that we observed. These characteristics affect what teacher trainees have an opportunity to learn from formal interactions with mentor teachers. Although we did not observe their informal interactions,

learning about them only through interviews, it seems likely that mentors would talk about teaching in similar ways on such occasions.

Telling not teaching. Across the conferences, mentors did more telling than asking or explaining. As a result, teacher trainees got a lot of advice from highly experienced teachers, but they rarely heard the rationale for the advice. Nor did they often get the kind of explanation that would prepare them to act on the advice or adapt it to new situations.

Mentors regularly told trainees things to do and things to avoid. The conferences contain various examples: Don't talk over students and don't let them call out. Avoid busywork. Use journals. Have students read a novel of their choosing at the beginning of class. Build some writing into every English class. Don't solve the problems for the students; get them to do the work. Don't rely on the textbook. Teach from your subject matter knowledge. Back off on the rules.

While the advice may be sound, the trainees may not see the point or know enough to be able to follow it. Why should every English lesson offer a balance of reading and writing? What are the merits of cooperative grouping? How can you tell when the language of a story is "too difficult for these students"? What distinguishes a "good" math problem from a not-so-good one? How can you link literature to students' lives in meaningful ways? What would a productive discussion of a moral dilemma look like with these students and how should a teacher lead such a discussion? How do you find out whether students really understand?

Some of these questions focus on the principles behind the practices recommended by the mentors. Others call for more detailed guidance about how to carry out the recommendation in a particular context. Since teacher trainees have no professional preparation or teaching experience, it is not surprising that they would be unsure about how to enact many of the suggestions they hear.

Lila worries about how students might respond to Clark's question. Based on her knowledge of students' economic background, she suspects they would applaud Robin Hood's actions—something she cannot condone. But she does not help Clark clarify why he wants students to discuss this question, what such a discussion might look like, what ideas students are likely to bring, and how a teacher can help them evaluate their positions or consider alternative possibilities. Without such assistance, Clark, like most beginning teachers, must rely on trial-and-error learning or fall back on images and ideas from his own schooling.

Brian wants Craig to put the math textbook aside, teach from his subject matter, make up his own problems. If Craig knew how to do these things, he probably would. The

fact that he doesn't suggests that he probably needs help learning to transform his own knowledge of mathematics into appropriate problems and explanations for his students. Telling him to do so will not help Craig develop the requisite images, skills, and dispositions. Someone has to show him how to create good math problems and use cooperative grouping and help him develop some criteria for determining what counts as a "good" problem.

Praising not critiquing. In their training, mentors are taught to produce descriptive accounts of classroom events and give nonjudgmental feedback. They are also told to stress the positive. Several mentors explained how these ideas influenced their practice. Candace offered this account of scripting: "I just put it down very dispassionately, nothing with a lot of adjectives, just statements of things that were occurring." Terri explained her efforts to praise, not criticize: "We are told that we're not to say anything negative. Now I usually say what good things I see and I'm really careful not to say anything else." Our observations confirmed that mentors did what they were trained to do.

Candace and Lila scripted the lessons they observed and then organized their conferences around the chronology of the lesson, offering praise, feedback or advice about each segment. We could not discern an overarching purpose for the interaction. Like the training, the conferences had a fragmented quality and it was often difficult to figure out what the mentor was trying to accomplish.

Nor did mentors openly reveal their dissatisfaction with practices they did not endorse. While Candace disapproved of the idea of busywork, she did not pursue the matter with Kevin. While Terri was skeptical about whether all students catch on so quickly, she accepted Dave's reply that they did. Only Craig let Brian know that he should not do the problems for the students.

The mentors' neutral stance may reflect a belief, widespread among teachers, that teaching expresses an individual's style or personality which is fixed and cannot be changed. In fact, when we asked Candace whether she approved of all the things Kevin had done, she made such an argument:

> Kevin has his personality . . . his own attitudes. I'm much more strict and I don't want to say that I think all teachers should have my style because that's one thing I try to respect—that you have hundreds of different styles.

Mentor teachers may also avoid critique because they equate it with evaluation, something they are not supposed to do, at least on a formal basis (Parker, 1990). Finally, mentors like most teachers may simply be uncomfortable about giving constructive criticism because they have no experience doing so and no opportunity to learn how.

Stressing the positive and avoiding the negative can be a way of showing support. As the testimony below reveals, this is how trainees experienced their mentors' nonjudgmental stance. But surface praise or praise without reasons does not help trainees' develop judgment, and neutrality may not help them cultivate the disposition to reflect critically on their practice. If novices come to think of teaching in terms of personal style, where will they learn about the place of shared professional standards?

What Trainees Say About Their Mentors

Testimony from teacher trainees extends the picture of mentoring beyond formal conferences. By their responses to questions about the kind of help they received from mentors, the frequency of interactions and the nature of the exchanges, teacher trainees add further detail, reinforcing the picture of mentoring that emerges from observations and interviews with mentors and program officials. Their testimony reinforces the impression that mentors are helping novices fit into the local teaching culture. With few exceptions, they are not trying to change that culture.

Being there. Just as mentors stressed the importance of being there, so trainees valued their mentor's availability or lamented their inaccessibility. One trainee talked about the good fortune of having a mentor next door so that she could run over with all sorts of questions. Another regretted that her mentor "wasn't there at my door readily available." Not surprisingly, the frequency of interaction varied with the proximity of the mentor.

The theme of "support" dominated the responses. Trainees mentioned all the different kinds of help that mentors provided, including a shoulder to cry on, pointers about discipline, help with paperwork, advice about colleagues, suggestions for assignments. One trainee ticked off the following categories of support:

> Moral support, material support, time-off support to do things for my classroom, friendship support, support support—anything I wanted to asked for was addressed and some things I didn't think of that my mentor felt were important were addressed.

Nonjudgmental. Many of the trainees commented on the importance of mentors not being evaluators, making it easier to ask for help and to be open about problems. "Because they don't evaluate you," one trainee said, "you can talk to them in an honest way." In discussing this feature of mentoring, trainees reveal how much they are affected by a teaching culture that isolates teachers from one another and discourages them from asking

colleagues for help. Having a mentor who accepts what you say without criticism or judgment enabled trainees to overcome these cultural barriers:

> You want to be able to not have criticism of what you are doing but be able to lay out what you're doing and ask them what they're doing and what they would advise you to do in a situation like this. You don't want to be afraid that somebody might come back and judge you harshly or talk to somebody else down the hall.
>
> Part of the stress I think is the question: Am I doing the right thing? In teaching you are very much alone. And so to be able to ask somebody so that they won't be judging you—this is what I'm doing or what would you do or am I doing the right thing now?
>
> She is still there for me and will be a lifelong friend. I did not hesitate to express an inadequacy or my need for support. I didn't have to think twice about a question being too ridiculous. There was total acceptance by her.

Specific advice. Trainees also report that mentors give them lots of specific suggestions about what to do in their teaching. One trainee described how his mentor sized up his room arrangement in which students were seated facing one another and said, "That's not going to work very well. . . . You're going to have a control problem." So he changed the desks back to facing the front chalkboard. Another trainee explained that he had been rather "free flowing" about his lessons, not putting anything on paper, until his mentor showed him how to use the district's seven-step lesson plan format. A third described how he watched his mentor teach a unit on a short story and then taught the same unit to his own eighth-grade class. A fourth said that her mentor helped her rephrase some word problems that the math department had created for "warm-up exercises."

Mentors frequently gave trainees advice about how to handle difficult behavioral situations. For example, one trainee said her mentor helped her figure out what to say to parents when eight students cheated on a test. Another explained that her mentor told her how to talk to Hispanic gang members: "Be very stern, fair but firm and don't ever let the student have the last word." A third said that she learned how to deal with fights in the classroom from her mentor: "Call them by name and tell them to get apart. If that doesn't work, you get help. Don't interfere yourself."

Earlier we mentioned that 2 of the 12 mentors we studied framed their role in educational terms. When their trainees talked about the kind of help they received from these mentors, their story differed from the stories of the other trainees. The testimony

below suggests that, at least in these relationships, mentoring meant more than giving support and advice. It also meant helping novices develop a principled understanding of teaching.

> He taught me a lot about what teaching is and how children learn. Things I don't think any university class could ever teach. I mean he had 35 years of experience with children. . . . He was a father figure and he really guided me. I mean he taught me a lot about curriculum, about how to handle classes, about how I should think about education. I mean he really helped me as far as understanding the general idea of teaching mathematics.

Temporary help. The testimony of trainees confirmed that informal contacts were more frequent than formal observations and conferences. Occasionally we heard about a mentor who wrote down the times when the trainee switched topics ("I noticed that I spend way too much time going over homework") and diagramed interactions between students "so I could see who was disruptive." But this was the exception rather than the rule. No one talked about observation and conversation with a more experienced colleague as an integral part of learning to teach and learning from teaching.

In general, trainees portrayed their relationship with mentors as a temporary one, essential in the beginning when they felt overwhelmed and didn't really know what to do but less necessary over time as they gained confidence and learned the ropes. This message came through strongly in the second year of the program when we again asked trainees about the nature and frequency of their interactions with mentors. Over and over again, trainees said that they really didn't need their mentor any more since they were not having problems this year. Even when they did not like their second-year mentor, trainees minded less because they did not have to rely on them very much. One trainee, interviewed in May, had not seen her mentor since February. But she did not regard this as a problem since "I don't have any dire emergencies that I felt she would be helpful with." The statements below are typical of the sentiments we heard:

> I didn't need to have her observe me. I think she's been in maybe two or three times. She isn't as conscientious as my first mentor but I also didn't feel the need.

> She wanted me to observe other teachers but I guess this year I didn't feel a need.

> If I were a first-year teacher, I wouldn't be as satisfied as I am now because I didn't feel I needed here to come in and observe me. Since I didn't feel I needed that, it doesn't bother me.
>
> If things are going fine, she pretty much leaves me on my own.

These statements suggest that mentoring did not alter the fundamental condition of privacy for these beginning teachers (Little, 1990b). Although they valued having a mentor to help them at first, they did not come to see interactions with mentor teachers as integral to getting better at teaching over time. In short, the mentoring that trainees experienced in the Los Angeles Alternate Route Program did not seem to foster an orientation toward collaboration and collegial exchange as essential to the work of teaching.

How Does Mentoring in LA Add Up?

Mentor teachers in the Los Angeles Teacher Trainee Program have a daunting responsibility. They are supposed to guide and support new teachers in the district. Since these new teachers have no previous professional education, mentors must help them learn to teach while teaching. How mentors carry out this responsibility has consequences for the kind of teachers trainees become and the sort of learning opportunities they extend to students.

In this report we have examined what Los Angeles mentors are supposed to do according to the expectations of program officials; what mentors actually do based on their testimony and our observations of their interactions with teacher trainees; and what teacher trainees say they do based on interviews across their two years in the program. Now it is time to step back and consider how this kind of mentoring adds up as preparation for and induction into teaching. But this is not a straightforward question. How mentoring adds up depends on what we expect from mentors, what we want for teacher trainees, what we believe is most appropriate for this context.

If we think of the mentoring component of the Teacher Trainee Program as a labor market improvement strategy, then we would want mentors to improve trainees' classroom performance and strengthen their commitment to remain in teaching (Mitchel & Hough, 1990). If we regard the mentoring component as an "institutionalized buddy system" (to quote one mentor teacher), then we might be satisfied if mentors provided emotional and material support so that trainees felt less isolated than they would without a mentor. If we think of the mentoring component as a form of on-the-job training, then we might expect mentors to introduce trainees to the curriculum materials, management systems, and

program goals that govern operations in their own school and district (Mitchel & Kerchner, 1983). If we regard mentoring as a form of collegiality, then we might want mentors to persuade trainees of the value of collaboration with colleagues on difficult and recurring problems of practice (Little, 1990a; 1990b). If we regard mentoring as a form of clinical teacher education, we might want mentors to focus trainees' attention on student learning (Feiman-Nemser & Buchmann, 1987), emphasize the importance of pedagogical reasoning (Shulman, 1987), and help trainees connect practical issues in their work to larger social, political and moral questions (Zeichner, 1992).

Each of these formulations has been associated with beginning teacher assistance programs. Which are most appropriate and realistic for the Los Angeles alternate route context? What considerations should go into making such a decision? Who should have the authority to do so? While these question go beyond our purview and data, they suggest some of the complexities that surround a decision like this one that depends on political, economic, and educational considerations. Los Angeles does face severe teacher shortages and rapid teacher turnover. Alternate route candidates do begin teaching without professional preparation which means they are likely to fall back on images from their own schooling about what to do. The diverse student population in urban junior and senior high schools does present special challenges to all teachers and especially novices. Many parents, teachers and students are dissatisfied with the way things are in our urban schools.

The portrait of mentoring presented here shows how the Mentor Teacher Program and some individual mentors have defined their task and responded to these realities. In the Teacher Trainee Program, mentors seem to function more as "local guides" than "educational companions" (Feiman-Nemser & Parker, 1990). The dominant pattern of interaction illustrates what Little (1990b) calls the "aid and assistance" model of collaboration in which mentors are expected to give advice and trainees are expected to ask for help. This model is not likely to encourage a close analysis of practice or challenge the inherent conservatism in teaching (Lortie, 1975). The local orientation of the program means that teacher trainees are being helped to replicate, not change, existing models of teaching and learning.

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